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NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Attorney Paul J. McNulty announced that Denis Rivera, also known as "Conejo," 20, of Alexandria, Virginia and Noe David Ramirez Guardado, also known as known as "Tricky," 22, of Fairfax, Virginia, were convicted of Conspiracy to Commit Murder and First Degree Murder by a federal jury today for the murder of Joaquin Diaz, 20, on Dangerfield Island on September 16, 2001. The Honorable T.S. Ellis, III, scheduled sentencing for both defendants for February 13, 2004 at 9 a.m. The mandatory minimum sentence in this case is life in prison.

This murder involved the slaying of an innocent victim by members of MS-13 (Mara Salvatrucha), a violent street gang with origins in Central America. Three other members of MS-13 previously pled guilty to first degree murder and received life sentences. Those members are Andy Salinas ("Lucifer"), Angel Barrera ("Maldito") and Freddie Baires ("Travesio").

Testimony during the trial indicated that Guardado was the leader of Virginia Locos Salvatrucha and Rivera was the leader of the Big Gangster Locos Salvatrucha, two MS-13 cliques in the Northern Virginia Area. A third defendant, Luis Cartagena, "Scuby," 22, of Arlington, Virginia was acquitted of the same charges.

Mr. McNulty stated: "This was a brutal and vicious crime by defendants who have a wanton disregard for life. These convictions are an important victory in the continuing battle against gang violence in Northern Virginia."

McNulty praised the work of Detective Scott Powers, Investigator Robert Freeman, Officer Jose Medina of the United States Park Police as well as Detective Victor Ignacio of the Alexandria Police Department. McNulty also praised the assistance of the United States Marshals Service, Arlington County Sheriff's Department, Arlington County Police Department, Fairfax County Sheriff's Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Ron Walutes and Mike Rich.

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